

## **AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

**Listing of Claims:** This listing of claims replaces all previous versions and listings of claims in this application.

Claim 1. (Previously Presented) An animal excretions-treating material comprising particles, each particle being composed of a core layer of fibers and a skin layer to cover the core layer, the skin layer containing  $\alpha$ -starch and fibers.

Claim 2. (Previously Presented) The animal excretions-treating material as set forth in claim 1, wherein the fibers constituting the skin layer are short fibers having a mean fiber length in a range of 0.02 to 1 mm.

Claim 3. (Original) The animal excretions treating-material as set forth in claim 1, wherein the mean particle size of the  $\alpha$ -starch in the skin layer is at most 0.25 mm.

Claim 4. (Currently Amended) The animal excretions-treating material as set forth in claim 1, wherein the ~~composition of the skin layer is in a ratio of  $\alpha$ -starch to fibers~~ in the skin layer is in a range of 20:80 to 80:20 ~~20 to 80 and 80 to 20.~~

Claim 5. (Original) The animal excretions treating-material as set forth in claim 1, wherein the fibers in the skin layer are those of pulp.

Claim 6. (Previously Presented) The animal excretions-treating material as set forth in claim 1, wherein the  $\alpha$ -starch in the skin layer is tapioca  $\alpha$ -starch.

Claim 7. (Original) The animal excretions-treating material as set forth in claim 1, wherein the fibers in the core layer are those of pulp.

Claim 8. (Previously Presented) The animal excretions-treating material as set forth in claim 1, which has a bulk density in a range of 0.1 to 0.5 g/cm<sup>3</sup>.

Claim 9. (Previously Presented) The animal excretions-treating material as set forth in claim 1, wherein the particle has a diameter in a range of 2 to 20 mm.

Claim 10. (Previously Presented) An animal excretions-treating material comprising particles, each particle being flushable in a toilet and composed of a core layer of fibers and a skin layer to cover the core layer, the skin layer containing  $\alpha$ -starch and fibers to increase fluid absorption of each particle.

Claim 11. (Previously Presented) The animal excretions-treating material as set forth in claim 1, wherein the  $\alpha$ -starch is contained only in the skin layer.

Claim 12. (Previously Presented) An animal excretions-treating material comprising particles, each particle being biodegradable in a septic tank and composed of a core layer of fibers and a skin layer to cover the core layer, the skin layer containing  $\alpha$ -starch and short fibers of pulp having a mean fiber length in a range of 0.02 to 1 mm, the composition of the skin layer being in a ratio of the  $\alpha$ -starch to the short fibers in a range of 20:80 to 80:20.

Claim 13. (Canceled).

Claim 14. (New) An animal excretions-treating material comprising particles, each particle being composed of a core layer of fibers and a skin layer to cover the core layer, the skin layer containing  $\alpha$ -starch and fibers, wherein the  $\alpha$ -starch is present in an amount sufficient to promote agglomeration upon wetting of the skin layer.